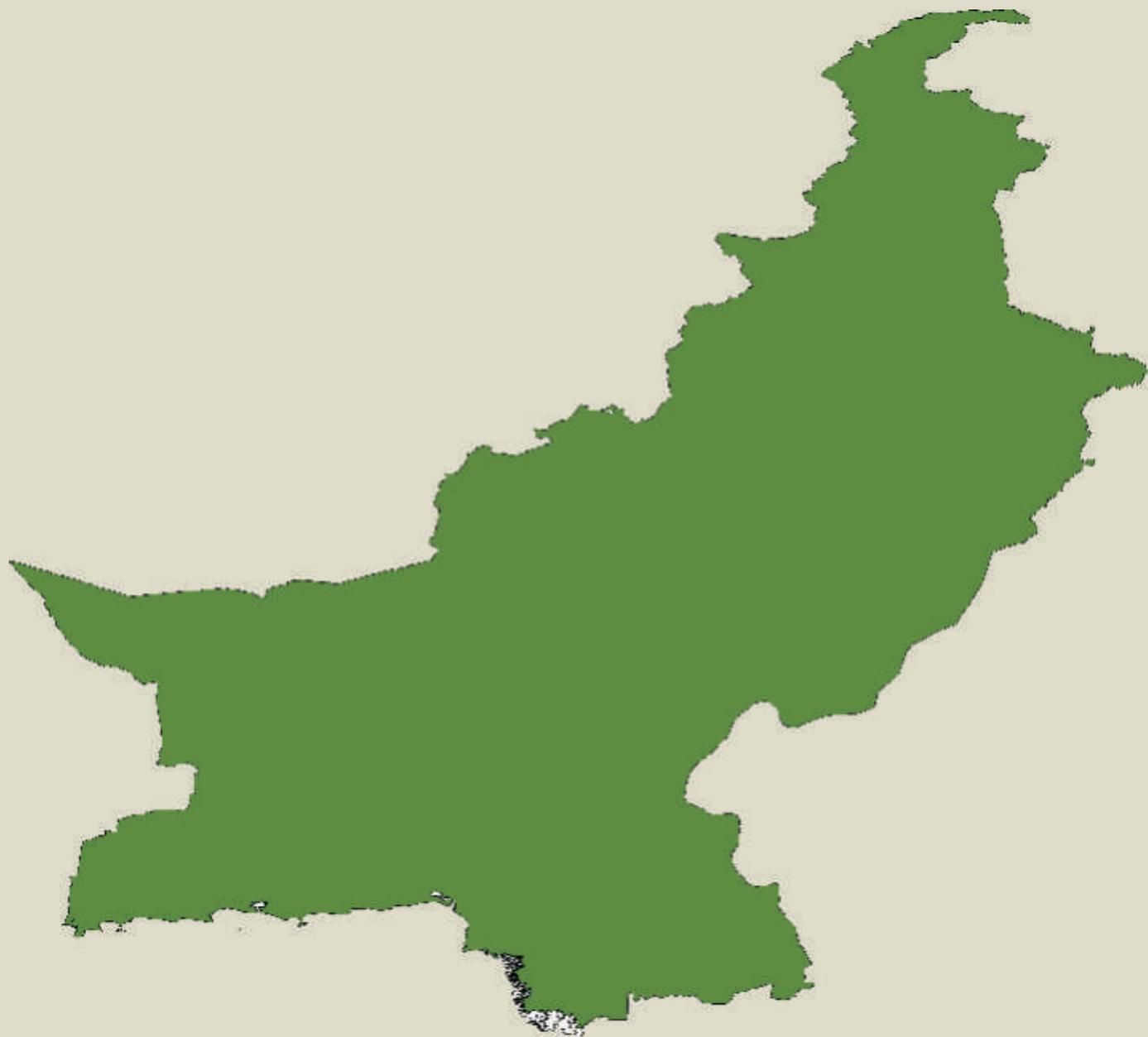


June 2021

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

*A Selected Summary of News, Views and Trends
from Pakistani Media*



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Dr. Mohammad Eisa
Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर परिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, June 2021

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Census controversy, Editorial, Dawn, 01 June¹

While the Council of Common Interests may have approved the controversial 2017 census in April of this year, Sindh continues to have major reservations about the exercise. This is reflected by the fact that the Sindh government has written to the Senate chairman and the National Assembly speaker calling for a joint session of parliament to discuss the issue. *According to the Sindh chief minister, the populations of Sindh and Balochistan have been undercounted. To back this claim, he has cited a UNICEF survey which lists average members of a household at 7.2 for Sindh, while the census results put the number of the average household at 5.64.* If these numbers are considered, based on the UNICEF survey Sindh's population should be over 61m, while the official headcount says the province is home to just under 48m people. *This is no small difference and will have a major impact on the division of resources. The MQM has also raised questions about the authenticity of the census.*

Pakistan's Afghan problem, Shahzad Chaudhary, The Express Tribune, 04 June²

It is in this maze that Pakistan needs to tread ever so carefully. The border must be controlled for entry and exit as for any modern state. Fencing will help as will the over 800 pickets, posts and forts when fully manned. *Fencing entails its own cost in lives as Afghan national forces and the many malicious groups in concert resist the effort to keep the border open for unrestrained movement.* Where needed garrisons must be created to bolster support to the deployed troops as well as keep a stable inner front. CPEC, Balochistan, and a thriving hinterland economy in a secure and a stable environment is our and this region's passport to a prosperous future. The earlier Afghanistan settles to this newer dynamic and plugs-in the greater shall be its returns in prosperity, though the initial few weeks after American withdrawal will need a robust defence of the western border. *Just as Punjabis, Sindh's and the Baloch on either side of their respective borders have settled into divided national denominations yet share cultural and heritage similarities, so do most Pashtun's.* Economic progress and shared prosperity remain proven anchors to common stakes. That is what keeps most naturalized Afghans from returning back to Afghanistan.

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1626864/census-controversy>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2303315/pakistans-afghan-problem-1>

Advocating jirgas, Editorial, Dawn, 07 June³

Government representatives must choose their words carefully; they should not appear to be taking a stance contrary to established law. *However, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid appeared to do precisely that on Friday. Addressing tribal elders during a Jirga at the South Waziristan Scouts camp, Mr. Rashid described the Jirga system as an excellent alternative dispute mechanism and said that laws should be enforced in the region in accordance with local traditions.* Perhaps the minister was simply trying to be gracious to his hosts, or maybe he indeed believes that jirgas have a role to play in delivering justice. By conceding anything to jirgas other than an extremely restricted role would be an irresponsible step. Such bodies, which completely exclude women even when standing in judgment in matters relevant to them, reinforce patriarchal social mores often through brutal sanctions. *There are numerous instances of individuals on the orders of jirgas even having been killed and women gang-raped in order to 'avenge' family 'hounour'. Now that constitutional rights have been extended to the tribal districts, the formal justice system must be strengthened there so that outdated mechanisms of so-called justice are weeded out.*

Pakistan's Afghan predicament, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 09 June⁴

With the American forces racing to the exit, Afghanistan has further descended into chaos. There is an element of inevitability about the unfolding situation. *The power vacuum widened by the withdrawal of foreign forces has encouraged the Afghan Taliban to accelerate their military offensive. Heavy casualties suffered by the Afghan government forces in recent days underscore the fierceness of the insurgents' assault.* Fierce fighting is going on in 26 of the 34 provinces. With no sign of the two warring sides reaching a negotiated political settlement there seems little possibility of cessation of hostilities. *The growing violence threatens to push Afghanistan into a new civil war with serious consequences for the region.* The deteriorating situation across the border has also worsened Pakistan's predicament as the country is caught in the midst of a geopolitical crisis. *It faces multiple security and foreign policy challenges with the threat of the Afghan conflict spilling over to Pakistani soil.* The Taliban's military success across the border is ominous for Pakistan's national security. It is bound to exacerbate this country's own problem of militancy in the border areas and religious extremism inside the country. Most perturbing is the report of transnational militant groups stepping up activities along the Pak-Afghan border regions.

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1627987/advocating-jirgas>

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1628371>

Thoughtless eviction, Editorial, Dawn, 15 June⁵

On Sunday, 13 June a large number of children, displaced from their abodes situated along the Gujjar and Orangi nullahs, protested outside the Karachi Press Club against the demolition of their houses. *The demolition was the outcome of a Supreme Court order after last year's devastating rains that inundated Karachi, with storm-water drains resembling raging rivers.* Resettlement itself under the Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme is far from certain with the project still in its nascent stages. *Evicted people live under the open sky, without shelter, kitchens or bathrooms. There is no security for them. On the other hand, the authorities hardly seem to bat an eyelid when it comes to large residential schemes being built on land forcibly taken from poor landholders, including housing societies located on the outfalls of the drains supposedly blocked by poor working-class settlements.* This is economic apartheid and might sow the seeds of class-based and ethnic unrest in the city. The authorities should reconsider their approach.

Honouring a brave man, Mohsin Dawar, International The News, 29 June⁶

The government of Balochistan has dismissed the claims of Kakar's family as 'negative news' even though they know that as an outspoken and critical public figure, he was facing serious threats to his life. In his last speech in the Senate, Usman Kakar too had spoken about the threats he had been receiving but his warnings about the threats to his life were ignored. Usman Kakar's funeral, however, was not merely about his unexplained death. *It was recognition of his stellar character and a tribute by the people of Balochistan to a genuine political worker who dedicated his life to the service of his people.* Usman Kakar's final political act was bringing together thousands of Baloch and Pashtun people in a moment of collective loss. In the past, differences between these communities have been exploited to keep them segregated and their political struggles fragmented. **But in his death, Kakar has shown us a new direction for the nationalist struggle in the country and the possibility of a revival of Baloch-Pashtun unity in this struggle.** Those who believed that Usman Kakar's legacy would be buried with him could not have been more wrong. His wisdom and memories belong to us, the people, and we will continue to carry forward his cause.

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1629429/thoughtless- eviction>

⁶ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/856488-honouring-a-brave-man>

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Trade deficit, Editorial, Dawn, 04 June⁷

*Pakistan's trade deficit has expectedly widened sharply during May, the ministry of commerce data showed on Wednesday. The gap between what the country sells to the world and what it buys from it 'ballooned' last month by 134pc to \$3.4bn from \$1.5bn a year ago. There's not much to worry about the rising import bill. This was expected. Two factors have played a major role in the increased import bill this fiscal from last year. **First**, the import of food, including wheat and sugar, and cotton have pushed imports more than was estimated at the beginning of the financial year. Next year, these imports are expected to moderate on better domestic crop yields. **Two**, the revival of economic activities and a surge in the demand for Pakistani exports has driven up imports of raw materials as well as machinery for technology replacement and capacity expansion. But the question is: should we be worried about the rising gap between what we import and what we export?*

Stabilizing the economy, Editorial, Jang, 07 June⁸

Whether because of the incompetence of the administration or sheer bad luck, as soon as the PTI led government assumed power the economy started falling. The situation of the economy affected the businesses as well as the salary class in Pakistan. *To address the abysmal economic situation in the country, the government changed the finance minister four times. But the situation kept getting worse.* Now, thank God, there are some positive signs and the economy that was caught in a whirlpool for the last few years, seems to be coming out of it. *Pakistan has started the journey of recovery of the economy. According to the IMF, as per the GDP of the country, Pakistan has not witnessed a major rise in the government loans.* Because of the Coronavirus pandemic, economies like that of America and India suffered a lot. *Pakistan managed to stabilize its economy even during the pandemic and which would grow by 4 percent in 2021 as well. ... The country would also witness an increase of 14.6 percent in individual income which would go up from 1405 dollar to 1610 dollars. Similarly the agriculture sector would see an increase of 2.77 percent and industries sector a rise of 3.57 percent.* The economic indicators are good for the economic policies of the government. But the government should also focus

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1627451/trade-deficit>

⁸ https://jang.com.pk/news/938127?_ga=2.77042960.487878278.1623043366-1172285561.1585539487

on daily inflation which has grown 11 percent from 6 percent in the last few months.

Quitting IMF programme not possible now: Tarin *Dawn*, 17 June⁹

Ruling out any disagreement, Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin has said that it is not possible for Pakistan to get out of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme at this time when the economy is reviving. In a testimony before the Senate Standing Committee on Finance chaired by Senator Talha Mahmood on Wednesday, *Mr Tarin also held out an assurance that the language of the proposed section 203-A on powers of taxmen to arrest will be changed and all objectionable things will be removed.* Earlier, the committee unanimously turned down the arrest powers of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The minister informed the committee that the government estimates economy to grow by 7 per cent by FY23 when the country will go for new elections with projection of 5pc-5.5pc for upcoming 2021-22. *Opposition parties have blamed the government that the budget 2021-22 is laden with tax measures suggested by the IMF, which are anti-poor and will jack up consumer inflation.*

A dangerous bargain, Khurram Hussain, *Dawn*, 17 June¹⁰

The budget he has just announced has a deficit of almost Rs4 trillion and more than a quarter, Rs1.056tr, of the net financing for this is supposed to come from floating international bonds and the IMF. Without satisfying the IMF and successfully concluding the sixth review it is highly unlikely that they will be able to realize these funds, as well as the many others that are subject to successful implementation of the Fund programme, such as disbursements from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. And without these funds the budget with all its tax cuts, subsidies and elevated development spending could well be in jeopardy. This budget faces massive risks such as inflation and a resurgence of the trade deficit, but the government is confident. *All through FY21 inflation has been steadily rising, but with oil prices nearing two-year highs, the circular debt marching on, prices of miscellaneous goods such as palm oil, coal and various industrial raw materials also increasing, and an impending massive increase in the petroleum development levy, could all provide significant impetus to inflation precisely as growth gets going. For many months now, interest rates have already been negative in real terms and the State Bank has been sending muted signals that this situation may well need to be reversed at some point. A pick-up in inflation could push their hand.*

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1629804/quitting-imf-programme-not-possible-now-tarin>

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1629820/a-dangerous-bargain>

SECURITY SITUATION

Afghan endgame, Editorial, Dawn, 03 June¹¹

As the Sept 11 deadline for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan draws closer, genuine concerns are being raised by this country about the shape of things to come after American and NATO troops leave. Afghanistan remains politically unstable; in fact, violent incidents involving loss of life continue apace. *What Pakistan and many other regional states fear is a return to total anarchy in Afghanistan, and the after-effects of this in the region. These concerns have been amplified, among others, by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who told an Afghan delegation on Tuesday that all sides needed to “seize the historic opportunity” to reach a broad-based settlement.* But the million-dollar question remains is the Afghan Taliban the most powerful force opposing the Kabul government willing to listen to such advice? Most of all, the Taliban must ask themselves if they want to prolong the war, or share power in a democratic manner. *The militia should realize that even if they defeat government forces, other militant players will be quite eager to dislodge them from power in Kabul.*

Another train tragedy, Editorial, Dawn, 08 June¹²

The loss of over 40 lives in a train collision near Daharki in Sindh on Monday morning is a stark reminder of Pakistan Railways’ abysmal passenger safety record and the unfulfilled promises of successive governments to revamp its broken infrastructure. The accident also raises questions about the incumbent rulers’ commitment to modernising the poorly managed railway, and refurbishes its aging tracks and erratic signal system for improving passenger safety. *Pakistan has a long history of train accidents caused by a decaying railway infrastructure. Apart from major accidents, scores of minor incidents of derailments take place every year but are not mentioned in the news.* Most of these accidents occur because of dilapidated tracks, a faulty interlocking signal system, aging rolling stocks, etc. Political rhetoric aside, the administration appears as clueless about a revival strategy as any previous government. Apparently, it has been hoping that the promised Chinese investment of \$6bn in the Main Line-1, connecting Peshawar to Karachi, would save the dying railway. With China reluctant to invest its money in the project, the government does not have a strategy to fall back on to resuscitate the bankrupt department. With or without Chinese money, the job of putting the railway back on track will not be easy; it will take a long time, large investments and strong political will.

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1627200/afghan-endgame>

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1628168/another-train-tragedy>

Bahria Town violence, Editorial, Dawn, 09 June¹³

Behind the immaculate façade of Bahria Town Karachi, violence has been ongoing since years. Indigenous farming communities have been coerced into surrendering the land they have called home for generations and seen their livelihoods destroyed. Police contingents have raided goths and threatened those who continued to resist their strong-arm tactics, sometimes arresting them on spurious terrorism charges. Bahria Town personnel, along with local authorities, have overseen the bulldozing of villages, the destruction of tube wells, the uprooting of orchards and even the levelling of graveyards. All this suffering, the very erasure of a people's way of life and their history, scarcely found a mention in the media. *The impunity with which Bahria and other powerful land developers operate, trampling the law and the rights of local populations, is straining the fragile bonds between the different ethnic groups in the country and also deepening the sense of socioeconomic inequality.* Such a model of 'development' is unsustainable and as phony as the replica Eiffel Towers that dot Bahria's gated communities.

Suicide in Thar, Editorial, Dawn, 14 June¹⁴

Tharparkar is an appropriate case study for examining the factors that lead some people to the desperate, final act of ending their lives. The district, according to a recently concluded five-year study on suicides in Sindh, topped the list with 79 cases. When the figure was disaggregated according to gender, the area also registered the most number of female suicides in the province, with 48 women ending their lives compared to 31 men. Recently, the Sindh Mental Health Authority, with financial assistance from the Thar Foundation and technical input from psychologists, the provincial health department etc., has launched a 'psychiatric autopsy' of the suicides that took place in the area from 2016 to 2020. *The objective of the first-ever such exercise in Pakistan is to uncover the reasons why so many in the district chose to end their lives. Significantly, the segment of Thari society where most cases of suicide are found is in the lower-caste Hindu community. Women, possibly due to gender-related pressures in an oppressive society, are more likely to make attempts at committing suicide.*

Lahore blast, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 24 June¹⁵

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1628366/bahria-town-violence>

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1629269/suicide-in-thar>

¹⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2306879/lahore-blast>

Three dead; 21 injured; four in critical condition. This time the terrorists struck in the heart of the country – the capital city of Punjab – rather than in any border areas of Balochistan or Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, as has been the case for quite some time. *The target of what is described as a car blast – occurring in Jauhar Town neighbourhood of Lahore yesterday – was the residence of proscribed Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed, who is currently serving a jail sentence over terrorism-related charges. A nearby police picket actually shielded Saeed's residence otherwise the "remote-controlled" attack would have hit the intended target,* confirms the chief of police in Punjab province, Inam Ghani. A police officer is among those injured in the blast for which 30kg explosives of foreign make was used. *While our law-enforcement machinery is already expected to be aware of the growing security challenge in the face of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, there is need for all relevant authorities to sit together to review their coordination mechanism and devise a comprehensive response strategy.*

Terrorism concerns, Editorial, Dawn, 30 June¹⁶

As a negotiated settlement eludes Afghanistan, and the grim prospect of large-scale violence begins to haunt that country in the aftermath of the US withdrawal, neighbouring states, specifically Pakistan, have genuine security concerns. It is for this reason the country's security establishment will be briefing the nation's elected leadership during an in-camera session in parliament tomorrow. Pakistan has good reason to be concerned. After all, thousands of hardened anti-Pakistan terrorists are currently seeking refuge in Afghanistan, and if the situation in that country deteriorates, these inimical elements will have a freer hand to wreak havoc here. *The Foreign Office pointed out on Monday that 5,000 terrorists belonging to the proscribed TTP have sanctuaries in Afghanistan, questioning a statement by Kabul that the TTP does not operate in that country.* Moreover, the fact that hardened militants are hiding in Afghanistan has been confirmed by third parties, including the UN and US. While the security situation has improved considerably domestically, the threat remains, as the blast in Lahore last week indicated. *Once foreign forces leave Afghanistan, anti-Pakistan terrorist outfits may well have a greater opportunity to strike this country, therefore all state institutions must remain alert.* Pakistan must be ready to confront any refugee crisis, as well as militant activity, emerging out of the post-withdrawal situation in Afghanistan, and terrorist groups must be neutralised before they shed more innocent blood in this country.

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1632309/terrorism-concerns>

Restoration of Kuwaiti visa, Editorial, Jang, 01 June¹⁷

The resumption of Kuwaiti visas, after a gap of ten years, is certainly good news for Pakistani families, businesspersons, artisans, and workers. The decision was announced on the side-lines of Pakistani Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed's visit to Kuwait yesterday, 31 May 2021 after talks with Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamid Al-Sabah on bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest. The Home Minister also presented a special letter from the Prime Minister of Pakistan to the Kuwaiti Prime Minister. *It was decided in the meeting that the issuance of family and business visas between Pakistan and Kuwait would be started immediately as well as to Pakistani workers.* In addition, there will be no restrictions on technical visas in the medical and oil fields, and Pakistanis living in Gulf countries will now be able to travel to Kuwait with online visas. *It should be noted that the two brotherly Muslim countries have maintained close ties since the formation of Pakistan, but in 2011, the Kuwaiti government banned the issuance of visas to citizens of Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan due to security concerns. Efforts to restore Kuwait's visa were unsuccessful despite the defeat of terrorism in the homeland many years ago, but gradual progress was made in that direction.* In November last year, the foreign ministers of the two countries agreed to increase cooperation in various walks of life, while in mid-March this year, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed indicated the possibility of early resumption of Kuwaiti visas for Pakistanis, which was formally announced yesterday. In addition to a significant increase in bilateral trade, the decision will provide employment opportunities for Pakistani professionals and workers in the brotherly country. It will certainly have a positive impact on the national economy.

America's mission to throw Afghanistan in crisis, Majid Ali Syed, Ummat, 07 June¹⁸

After signing of the Doha agreement on 29 February between the Taliban and the US, many had thought the long war in Afghanistan might come to an end. *But hurdles are being created in implementing the agreement. After the coming of the Biden administration in power in the US, many changes have been made in the agreement and the Taliban are not happy with them.*

American defence minister Gen Lloyd James Austin also is not happy with the changes made by the Biden administration. *America has learnt no lesson from*

¹⁷ <https://jang.com.pk/news/935107>

¹⁸ <https://www.ummat.net/2021ab/06/07/news.php?p=idr3.gif>

Vietnam and Beirut wherefrom it had leave after suffering a humiliating defeat. This would be the third time America would have to leave without achieving anything, despite spending billions of dollars and losing over 4000 soldiers. The Taliban have said it clearly that they would not follow an agreement that would make America a dominant actor. They said that we have signed the agreement as an independent democratic Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as an equal partner. The conspiracy to not abide by the agreement and imposing small terror groups upon the Talban and involving neighbouring countries in Afghanistan would neither be accepted nor agreed to by the Taliban. On the future of Afghanistan, America, Iran and Pakistan agree on many points. Meanwhile after a brief tension in Pak-Saudi relations, two countries are improving their ties. On the other hand, America-Iran relations are also improving. According to some international media reports, America has been able to convince Pakistan and Iran that in case of a need they have agreed to allow the US to use their air space, airports and also create temporary military bases in their respective countries. This is meant to weaken the Taliban in case they attack any neighbouring country and to start a long proxy war. Pakistan. However, has rejected any such development.

Islamophobia and the killing of Pakistanis, Editorial, Jang, 10 June¹⁹

The increasing anti-Muslim bias, discrimination and Islamophobia in the Western countries have started crossing every line. It was seen in London city of Canada's Ontario province where a 20-old killed four members of Muslim family driving over them. The attacker has been arrested. Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau has called the attack a terrorist attack. He said that the government was with the Muslim community in Canada. There was no place for Islamophobia in Canada. According to the mayor of London, the family was attacked according to plan for being Muslim. Prime Minister Imran Khan has been running a campaign against Islamophobia. While condemning the tack, the premier said that it was a sign of increasing Islamophobia in the West. The international community needs to take action against it. ... The reality is that a wrong interpretation and misguided perspective are presented in the West about the Muslims. The Muslim countries need to fight this out together.

¹⁹https://jang.com.pk/news/939599?_ga=2.113072513.487878278.1623043366-1172285561.1585539487

Hat-trick of hungama in the national assembly, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 18 June²⁰

The elected representatives of the people have completed a hat-trick of commotion in the national assembly. Since the presentation of the budget, the commotion continued to the third day, making the national assembly a fish market. The members tore apart the budget copies, killed the possibility of a constructive debate, and threw abuses against each other while overlooking the presence of the women colleagues in the assembly. Speaker Asad Qaiser banned some members from the assembly. *After the speaker failed to control the situation, the opposition has decided to bring no-confidence motion against Asad Qaiser.* In this regard the chairman of PPP Bilawal Bhutto met the opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif yesterday. Despite that the members did not stop and on the third consecutive day the commotion continued. *Uproar in the national assembly is not appropriate in any sense. Nor does it suit the elected representatives. They were not elected to destroy the sanctity of the parliament. This kind of behavior from the elected members neither benefits the public nor helps in strengthening democracy in the country.* The elders of the government and the opposition should think carefully and resolve the matters to restore the sanctity of the parliament.

Imran Khan rejects giving America a base, Editorial, *Jang*, 21 June²¹

While giving an interview to American news channel HBO Prime Minister Imran Khan said that “Pakistan would not provide a base or allow America to use Pakistan’s land for activities in Afghanistan.” *The strong statement by the premier has put all the ongoing speculation that Pakistan would provide a military base to the US after the latter’s withdrawal from Afghanistan, to rest.* In the wake of the US’ war on Afghanistan after 9/11 Pakistan provided bases to the US. In return, Pakistan was overtaken by a strong wave of terrorism. At the same time, *America started making drone attacks normal in which according to the US estimates, on average 50 civilians were killed for killing one terrorist.* The statement came in the background of the report that America wanted a military base to protect its interests in the region after the withdrawal. The Taliban had warned the neighbouring countries to provide a base to the US that it would be a historical blunder. In the HBO interview the premier said that clearly that Pakistan would not provide a military base to the US. *In contrast to the Musharraf era, the decision taken by the current regime has shown that an elected government is better capable of protecting national*

²⁰ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2021-06-18/page-4/detail-5>

²¹ https://jang.com.pk/news/945197?_ga=2.57296610.976332755.1624255141-1172285561.1585539487

interest than an authoritarian one. Recently foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi had also cleared that Pakistan would not provide any base to the US. The situation in Afghanistan is complicated. Power struggle is going on in the country. Therefore, it is necessary that all actors need to cooperate in the country.

The beginning of a new war for power in Afghanistan, Gen (R) Mirza Aslam Beg, *Ummat*, 24 June²²

As soon as the process of foreign troops' withdrawal began, the Afghan Taliban started their aggressive activities and took over the control of many important areas. *In response to the Taliban's latest onslaught, America would try to attack the Taliban by using its air power. America can use any of its bases in West Asia for that purpose. In such actions from the US innocent people would get killed more than the Taliban because the latter know well how to protect themselves.* While taking over the military bases in Afghanistan the Taliban had also occupied American weapons. At this moment fighting is going on in 80 districts while the Taliban have encircled many cities. At some places Afghan security forces were killed and at others they surrendered to the Taliban. According to some reports, the Taliban have taken over a big military base in Sar-e Pol province and procured 20 tanks, 50 military vehicles, 50 transport vehicles and 300 American M16 guns. *According to the Taliban military commission, over 800 Afghan security forces surrendered at a military base in Zabul province. In Nangarhar 150 Afghan soldiers surrendered. ... In Kunduz province the Taliban attacked a police academy, a military camp and three check posts and took over two check posts. In these attacks two tanks were destroyed, 12 soldiers killed and 19 injured.* Two check posts were occupied in Baghlan province as well. ... Similarly in an attack on a check post in Jowzjan province, four security members including a commander were killed and three injured. In Herat province 10 soldiers including a commander were killed. *Given the Taliban's actions and their success in Afghanistan, all speculations and apprehensions that a civil war might start in Afghanistan have been put to rest.*

²² <https://www.ummat.net/2021/06/24/news.php?p=idr2.gif>

Reconciliation between the government and Shahbaz Sharif, The Reporters, ARYNews, 02 June²³

In an interesting development, *the federal government on Wednesday, 02 June 2021 withdrew its appeal from the apex court challenging the permission granted by the Lahore High Court (LHC) to PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif on May 7 to fly abroad for treatment.* The host underlined that before the hearing of the case in the Supreme court it looks like that there was an out of court settlement between the government and Shehbaz Sharif, both sides decided to take a step back and the case was disposed off by the SC. PML-N president assures SC he will not pursue contempt proceedings. Sabir Shakir and Chaudhary Gulam Hussain analyzed this latest political development; Kamar Zaman Kaira of PPP is also the guest on the show. *Chaudhary Gulam Hussain* Pointed out that the Supreme Court also highlighted how the Lahore High Court worked in favour of Shehbaz Sharif; many questions have been raised on the same. *The budget session is coming and may be that is the reason the settlement took place and Shehbaz Sharif plays an important role in the opposition.* SC observed that the relief given by Lahore high court to Shehbaz Sharif should not become an example for the future cases. *Sabir Shakir* underlined that this is not a simple case and once the PTI government was behind Shehbaz Sharif and took an oath not to allow him to fly out of the country. But suddenly they changed the narrative and he pointed that it looks like someone has given advice to step aside his ego and slow the criticism of the opposition. *It looks like that now Shehbaz Sharif will be give a free hand, and Maryam Nawaz and Nawaz Sharif will be in a tight spot and today taking back the case against Shehbaz Sharif is the start of this.* Kamar Zaman Kaira-PPP: pointed out that the PML-N and other parties have always pointed fingers on PPP saying we have done deal with the government. Maulana Fazl Rehman and even *media pointed out and sidelined us but today it is clear who is doing deals with the PTI and that too openly.* We agree with the PDM to remove the PTI government but the PPP wanted to do it in a different manner that is more effective. Something has happened behind the walls between Imran Khan and Shehbaz Sharif that this development happened otherwise even when PM was in Saudia he was monitoring the case not to allow Shehbaz Sharif to fly out of the country. *Although the SC asked the right questions but at last the relief was given to Shehbaz Sharif and the government has a great role to play in this twist.* When the government has withdrawn the case against Shehbaz Sharif, his name will also be out from ECL.

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITTYRD86PwQ>

Sawal Yeh Hai with Maria Memon, PTI's attempt to gag the media, ARYNews, 06 June²⁴

*The government is talking about bringing in changes in the media laws especially after the Hamid Mir episode. They are also debating on a new framework for media. In a bid to converge multiple media regulatory bodies in Pakistan and expand the ambit of regulation for digital media, the government has proposed the formation of the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA). The host pointed out that the PTI government has used the media to build its narrative but now they are talking about controlling fake news. Minister of Information Fawad Chaudhary shared on twitter **that strict legislation against fake news is very important and groups that oppose legislation against fake news and call such actions freedom of expression have a dubious state of mind and balance.** He also pointed out in a TV debate that it can be an ordinance or bill. **The host asked if the government is trying to bring in an ordinance in the backdrop of controlling fake news. Guests: Saleem Bukhari & Mazhar Abbas. Saleem Bukhari pointed out that it is the same media that has helped Imran Khan build his narrative before coming into power and also after he took the oath of PM but today he is trying to gag the same media, sometimes they talk about laws, sometimes ordinances.** He pointed out that unless the PTI government brings in a ordinance, they cannot make new laws or change laws related to the media, therefore it will not be an easy battle for the government. If we look at the history of the media, many governments have tried to gag the media in the past but the media faculty fought back. The real problem now of the PTI government is the social media and they tried to ban Facebook and twitter, people used alternative media after the ban. **Mazhar Abbas** pointed out that Fawad Chaudhary gave a sweeping statement about fake news and generalized the media coverage of fake news but he should point out which channel or journalist is involved in fake news to make things clear. This shows the guilt of the government. **Even if there is undesirable reporting in the media, there are laws to curtail it but there are pick and choose when it comes to media regulations.***

Jirga with Saleem Safi, The future of Afghanistan, Geo News, 06 June²⁵

²⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvYKH9s_k7U

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nFyGLS0mqA>

Intense uncertainty clouds Afghanistan's future as concern grows in Pakistan and elsewhere about the increasing danger of its slide into chaos. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Friday, 04 June that *the country has been pushing for political settlement before foreign troops leave this year in order to reduce the risk of civil war. Khan's comments week are the latest expression of those fears.* In this episode of Jirga the host questions head of Jamaat-e-Islami, Siraj ul Haq on future of Afghanistan & peace process. **Guest:** Siraj ul Haq (Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami) **Q:** *Jamaat-e-Islami has a long history with Afghanistan, what will be the future of Afghanistan, war or peace?* **A:** We pray for peace and hopeful that Afghanistan will become a peaceful Islamic nation. We always suggest that if the outer force like America has to remove from the Afghan soil, then there should be unity among different fractions of Afghanistan to run a collation government. **Q:** *There is less fight between the Taliban and US forces but recently the Taliban and Afghan forces have exchanged heavy fire. When the US troops leave, do you consider this war of Taliban justified?* **A:** **We should not brush away the ground reality in Afghanistan and the reality is that Afghan Taliban has come a long way and struggled and finally forced the US troop to leave the soil.** Even the US agrees to the fact that although Ashraf Ghani has control over the urban parts of the country but the Taliban still controls a large chunk of the country, they have their system in place and people believe in them. So if Pakistan or USA decides not to recognize the Taliban who have the backing of the people, mean these countries, want war and not peace. This war is not good for Pakistan as well as the rest of the World. In short if the USA wants a dummy government in Afghanistan that works according to their interests, than it means it does not want peace but is inviting the Taliban for war. **Q:** *Why are the different factions like the Afghan government and the Taliban fighting? Why there are so many blasts in the country when the fact is that only Afghan people are dying?* **A:** As head of the religious organization, whenever I consult our counterparts in Afghanistan, we always suggest that they should solve the issues through talks and there is need for peace. Through this programme talking about the present situation *I want to give a message to the present Pakistan government that we should not look at the Afghan issue through the lenses of USA and in favour of the people of Afghanistan.* Presently due to presence of the US troops there is a tense situation and after they leave the situation has to be handled by the Afghan people. If we don't recognize the Taliban then this will be a big mistake, so many lives have lost and in future this will continue if Taliban is side-lined. The modern democracy will not work in Afghanistan and they will have a system that will suit them according to religion. *The failure of democracy in Pakistan is an example of why Afghanistan should not adopt this kind of system.* Afghans migrated due to Russia and NATO and when there will be peace, these people will come back.

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, PTI govt decides to mortgage airports, highways to issue Sukuk bonds & take loans by mortgaging government assets? ARYNews, 23 June²⁶

In the latest cabinet meeting of the PTI government held on Tuesday, 22 June 2021, *Federal Cabinet decides to issue Sukuk bonds and take loans by mortgaging government assets. It has decided to mortgage a few national institutions including the Pinid Bhattia-Lahore motorway section, Islamabad-Peshawar highway, Islamabad Expressway, Multan and Lahore airport.* Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said cabinet approved proposal of floating Sukuk bonds with objective to promote Islamic banking industry. The host reminded that in the past PM Imran Khan use to criticize the PML-N government blaming that they have kept Pakistan on mortgage to loans. The opposition has criticized the move, Maryam Nawaz asked who has given the PTI the right to mortgage state institutions. The episode discusses the issue and why PTI took this step? *Guests: Miftah Ismail-PML-N; Farrukh Habib-PTI. Miftah Ismail* pointed out that when the government decide to raise Islamic Sukuk they have to mortgage an asset, as simple as that but the point is that today the motorways Imran Khan has decided to mortgage are all build in the times of PML-N and Nawaz Sharif government. *Imran Khan criticized us in the past for mortgaging the national assets but now he is doing the same thing that shows his hypocrisy and taken complete U-turn.* Imran Khan has taken the highest loans in these three years and if Nawaz Sharif has taken loan, he build the country also, motorways and airports. **Farrukh Habib** argued that Sukuk bonds are Islamic and tax free, PML-N and PPP government in the past have issued Sukuk bonds for five and fourteen times respectively, Malaysia is also using the same Sukuk bond system. *The problem is that the PML-N and PPP in the past collected the loan money and invested in their own personal kickbacks. The PTI will be investing in dams, health cards and electricity.*

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRTJiL998Hs>

Khyber ²⁷	30/06/2020	Blast inside Landi Kotal house kills five of family	05	05
Balochistan				
Turbat ²⁸	01/06/2021	Four FC troops martyred, eight injured in Balochistan terror attacks.	04	08
Ghotki ²⁹	07/06/2021	At least 36 killed, scores injured as two passenger trains collide in Sindh's Ghotki district	36	100

²⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1632312>

²⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2302704/four-fc-troops-martyred-8-injured-in-balochistan-terror-attacks>

²⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2303888/at-least-36-killed-scores-injured-as-two-passenger-trains-collide-in-sindhs-ghotki-district>